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ABSTRACT

Some of the issues, history, and approaches in the testing of second language writing skills are reviewed. It is argued that because writing serves many important functions in the lives of individuals and activities that speech cannot do equally well, it is time to stop viewing writing as secondary to speech and to accord it equal attention. Most of the attention should be devoted to "writing with composing," the making and conveying of meaning by writing. It concludes that the testing of second language writing would benefit greatly from the very intensive work undertaken in the field of native language acquisition, and that both disciplines would benefit from closer cross-disciplinary ties. (MSE)

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TESTING WRITING ABILITY: A REVIEW

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1. Some Basic Issues in the Testing of Writing Ability

Several problems have occupied those researchers who have been working on the teaching and assessment of writing. Among them are the following:

(1) How can writing ability be defined or at least delimited?

(2) Is writing ability one unified construct or can it be measured by measuring its different components?

(3) If writing ability is measured by way of components, how should they be weighted, if at all?

(4) How can good writing tasks be constructed?

(5) How can valid and reliable rating methods be developed?

2. A Brief Historical Sketch

As Kelly (1969) notes, in classical times the peak of education was the art of rhetoric, which combined artisty in word use, logical reasoning, and, usually the techniques of public speaking. In classical times, what was written was usually also read aloud and elocution was an important part of training.

Kelly also suggests that throughout the history of language teaching, four types of exercise have been used in teaching composition: transcription and consequent rote learning of models, structural variation of models, imitation of masters, and original writing.

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In medieval times the practice of verse composition held an important position in Latin and Greek, but in more recent times prose writing has totally eclipsed verse writing, which John Milton, for one, would have approved. Medieval rhetoric concentrated on written composition, following the teaching of Quintillian and Cicero's Topica. However, in the 1800's free composition, which had been increasingly criticised, was largely replaced by text exegesis and translation. While translation had in the time of the Renaissance been advocated as a useful method of cultivating stylistic consciousness, it later became to be used to teach more elementary skills of making correct sentences and joining them together. Teachers were recommended to analyse carefully shortcomings in student writing. Translation was acquiring a basically negative stance. By the end of the 19th century, translation always preceded free composition or totally ousted it from the curriculum. A long way had been travelled from an emphasis on ideas and graceful expression (feel for language) to an emphasis on correct structure and linguistic equivalence.

In more recent times, the role of speaking and hearing was clearly emphasized at the expense of reading and, especially writing. Thus, e.g., the syllabus for the upper secondary schools in state of Hessen stated (1957) that listening and speaking precede reading and writing. The instructions for Hamburg from the same period specify that oral exercises are central in language study and that written exercises grow from the oral ones. The influential Ankara conference (1966), sponsored by the Council of Europe, recommended that students should be able to write what they are able to say. Finocchiaro (1965) suggested that writing should be taught and practised only to a limited extent in the teaching of foreign languages in primary grades.

3. How Has Writing Been Defined?

One of the scholars in whose honor this testing symposium has been arranged, Robert Lado (1962), has defined the ability to write as follows:

> We will then define writing a foreign language as the ability to use the language and its graphic representation productively in ordinary writing situations. More specifically we mean by writing a foreign language the ability to use the structures, the lexical items, and their conventional representation, in ordinary matter-of-fact writing.

Valette (1967) considers writing to be the most sophisticated of the four language skills. According to her, communication through the written word "possesses a certain degree of finality and demands real proficiency from the writer if it is to be effective" (p. 131). Valette took a developmental point of view in her recommendations concerning the testing of writing. Thus tests should be structured so that they measure the various aspects of student progress of acquiring the writing skill: the mechanics--vocabulary, spelling, grammar--have to be acquired before the student can aspire to precision of expression, fluency, and style. (Note how correctness, rather than communicative effectiveness, seems to dominate her thinking here.) Valette lists a number of ways testing partial aspects of writing, much in the style of Lado. In discussing composition, she states that "a composition measures the student's ability to organize his thoughts, to choose his vocabulary, to formulate his sentences - in short to commit his ideas to paper" (p. 157). She notes problems related to the amount of time needed for scoring and the objectivity of scoring. Among composition tasks she mentions "point of view" composition (physical descriptions, emotional states), letter-writing conventions, and thought-provoking essays.

Harris (1969) points out that the teaching of writing as an integrated course is normally deferred until rather advanced courses in foreign language study. He views writing as a complex skill involving the simultaneous practice

of a number of very different abilities, only some of which are strictly linguistic and some of which are never fully achieved by many students, even in their native language. Harris recognizes five general components of the writing process: content, form, grammar, style, and mechanics. He reviews the defense of the essay examination (real measure of writing abilities, motivates students to actually write, easy and quick to prepare) and the criticism levelled against it (unreliability, avoidance of problems, long scoring time). Harris himself recommends a combination of the objective and free writing tests, as did Lado.

Heaton (1975) differs from most of the earlier language testing experts by having a more sophisticated view of writing. He is conversant with old--or at least rediscovered--theory of written discourse, as shown by his discussion of the purpose and audience of writing and the forms (modes) of writing.

Heaton (1975) emphasizes that it is important to distinguish between the terms composition and essay. He writes:

> The writing of a composition is a task which involves the student in manipulating words in grammatically correct sentences and in linking those sentences to form a price of continouus writing which successfully communicates the writer's thoughts and ideas on a certain topic. Moreover, since in real-life situations there is generally a specific purpose for any writing, composition writing frequently takes the form of letters, reports, extracts from diaries, etc. Essay writing, on the other hand, involves far more than the production of grammatically correct sentences: it demands creativity and originality, since it is generally intended not only to inform but also to entertain. Essays on such topics as Clouds, The Importance of Being Last, and The Countryside at Night are written to sparkle and impress, and good essayists are as rare as good poets. (p. 127)

Heaton concludes that it is generally neither reasonable nor realistic to demand creativity and originality in the form of an essay, while it is reasonable to expect students to write accurate English for a meaningful purpose.

He also stresses the communication aspect of writing in insisting that

> the student should be presented with a clearly defined problem which motivates him to write. The writing task should be such that it ensures he has something to say and a purpose for saying it. He should also have an audience in mind when he writes. (p. 128)

Heaton considers the writing skills to be complex and difficult to teach, requiring the mastery of grammatical and rhetorical devices but also the mastery of conceptual and judgement elements. He lists the skills under four main areas: (1) grammatical skills: the ability to write correct sentences, (2) stylistic skills: the ability to use language effectively, (3) mechanical skills: the ability to use correctly conventions of written language, and (4) judgement skills: the ability to write in an appropriate manner for a particular purpose with a particular audience in mind, together with an ability to select, organize and order relevant information.

Oller (1979) suggests, quite correctly, that not all writing tasks are what he calls integrative and pragmatic task. Writing tasks qualify as pragmatic provided that certain key elements are present:

> the writer must have something to say; there must be someone to say it to (either explicitly or implicitly); the task must require sequential production of elements in the language that are temporally constrained and related via pragmatic mapping to the context of discourse defined by (or for) the writer. (p. 384)

Oller suggests that there is no real limit to the kinds of writing tasks that are potentially usable in language tests. He mentions writing about personal experiences and imagined topics; analytical or expository writing tasks; summarizing an argument; retelling a narrative; recalling an accident; explaining a lecture; expanding on a summary; filling in the details in an incomplete story.

More recently Finocchiaro and [illegible]ko (1983) have published "a practical approach" to foreign language testing. Its practicality seems to be limited by

the fact that there seems to be little theory behind the many lists of test types.

4. Some Problems in the Past work on the Testing of Writing

There are some problems with much of earlier work on the testing of writing cited in the above. First, writing has not received as much attention as a concern of testing as have several other aspects of language testing. Second, the literature does not display any thorough familiarity with the concept of writing as a social act and as a psychological process. Third, the nature of text and the variety of text types seems rather superficially treated. Fourth, the authors do not seem to have been familiar with the large amount of work done by mother tongue experts in the area of writing instruction. Some of these problems are addressed in the following, beginning with the relative neglect of writing in recent work on the development of second language instruction and testing.

Most testing experts have not addressed the measurement of writing as thoroughly as other aspects of language proficiency. Testing literature does not often seem to go beyond the elementary or intermediate stages of language teaching and learning, with their emphasis on oral communication skills. Yet, hundreds of thousands of students need to write a lot in a language which is not their first language. This applies to those countries where the language of instruction is only one of the many dialects of a country, or a created standard language, or a language of the former colonizing power. Another group affected is the students who go to study abroad and during the course of their studies need to answer written examinations, write term papers and theses. A third group are those who, after completing their professional education, need the ability to produce at least the first draft of letters, memoranda, contracts, papers, instructions, etc. As international contacts

intensify and the language skill requirements increase, the literate bias of our own post-industrial culture tends to make the skills related to written language more and more important.

It is possible that Oller's claim (Oller, 1979) that language ability is unitary (a claim he has more recently taken back, Oller, 1983) was based on a number of assumptions of language use several of which have proved questionable: he seems to share the view that children had essentially learned most of the structure of their L1 in the early years, and like so many experts in L2, he has not been interested in advanced foreign language skills (e.g., ESP, LSP) and thus not in writing in L2. Also, he does not seem to have been aware of recent research in literacy. All of these would have indicated that while various language skills obviously are related, there are also clear differences. Speaking and writing, for instance, emphasize somewhat different functions of language and they prefer somewhat different structures of language (cf. Perera, 1984; Takala, 1982).

Second, the concept of writing seems to have been rather poorly defined. Language testing needs to take a broad view of human activity: it should place language activities within the broader context of general human activity and purposes. More of this in section 5.1.

One of the most important conditions for advance in the testing of writing is a better understanding of text, text structures and text types and how these are related to the constants and parameters of the writing situations. Most of the knowledge relevant in this context comes from literary criticism and from the research done on mother tongue instruction. More on this topic in section 5.2.

5. Key Components in Developing the Methodology of the Testing of Writing

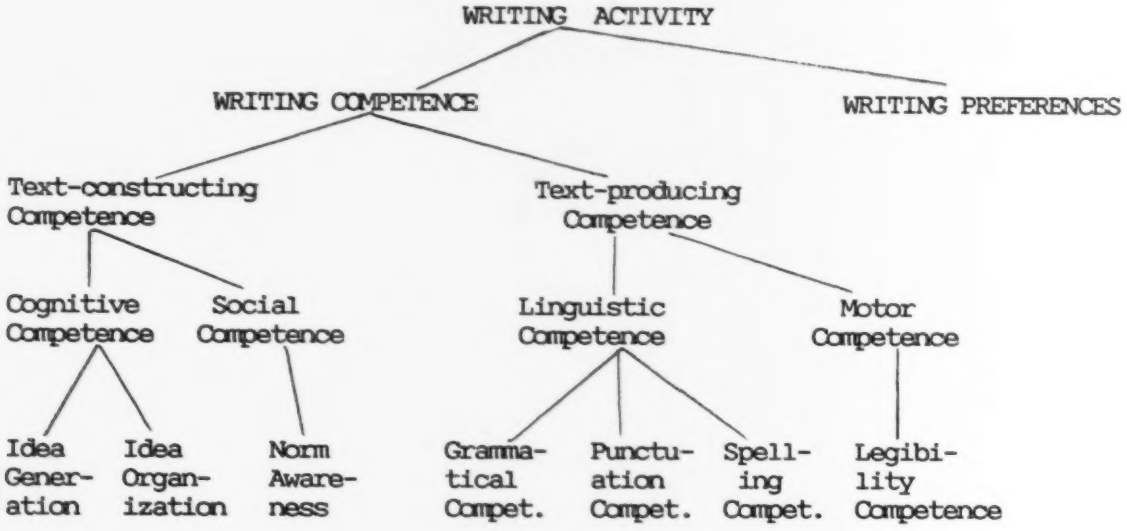
For making real progress in the testing of writing it is necessary to devote considerable attention to (1) the definition of the concept of writing, (2) the definition of the domain of writing, (3) the selection and definition of writing assignments, (4) the development of scoring systems that maximize the reliability of scores and the validity of score interpretations.

5.1. Writing as a concept

The present author (Takala 1982) has defined writing as follows:

> Writing is a multilevel interactive and goal-directed process of constructing, encoding and communicating meaning by means of a conventional system of visible marks (p. 220).

Writing as a construct can be further defined in a manner, which draws on the findings of modern cognitive psychology concerning discourse comprehension and builds on the discourse theory itself. The developed system can be summarized in a diagram form as follows (Takala, 1983, 1985).



"Writing competence" or "writing ability" can be operationalized as the ability to produce texts that cover the cells of the domain of writing (Vähäpassi 1983). A person may be able to write fluently a given type of discourse

(e.g., a story, a personal letter, an academic paper). Such a person may thus appropriately be called a competent or fluent story-writer, or letter-writer, but it is less clear if we can appropriately refer to him or her as a competent writer: the competence seems to be too limited to justify the epithet. To deserve the title of a competent writer, he needs to be able to write across a large range of tasks.

Writing competence, as a theoretical construct, can be argued to consist of two main components: discourse-structuring competence (or discourse-producing or rhetorical competence) and text-producing competence.

Discourse-structuring competence requires both cognitive and social competence. Cognitive competence refers to the cognitive ability to encode meanings and intentions effectively. It denotes the ability to generate discourse in which the units of thought and the units of language are related to each other in such a way that an appropriate structure of meaning is produced. The appropriateness is always dependent on the intention of the writer and the nature of the intended audience as well as the topic dealt with: appropriateness is not a universal concept, it is always context- and situation-specific.

It is important that the writer is able to present ideas that are perceptive, relevant and clear for the audience of writing. This can be called (the ability of) idea generation. However, this is not sufficient. The ideas must also be arranged in a consistent and coherent way, so that a discourse type is recognized and the text is made intelligible. This can be designated as (the ability of) idea organization. It is not immaterial how the meaning is organized in a linear text. Ease of comprehension is usually better if the two coincide. It has also been shown (Brewer & Lichtenstein, 1982) that events in a story have to be arranged in a certain order for the story to produce either suspense, surprise or curiosity in readers. Readers have genre-structural

knowledge and expect sufficient conformity with typical genre schemata. Similarly, discourse has to be structured differently if the type of text to be produced changes from narrative to persuasion, to description or to exposition.

Since writing is usually addressed to an audience other than self, discourse-structuring competence also presupposes social competence. The writer has to be aware of audience expectations (norms) and use an appropriate tone and style.

Text-producing competence can be divided into two parts: linguistic competence and motor competence. Linguistic competence consists of the ability to produce sentences using appropriate grammar, spelling and punctuation. Motor competence refers to the ability to produce an easily legible text.

5.2. Domain of Writing

The validity of writing assessment can best be addressed in terms of construct validity, content representativeness (or validity) and curricular validity. Since we do not have any clear notion of the psychological structure of writing, i.e., how general or how task-specific it is (see above, 5.1), construct validity can best be guaranteed by an analysis of the general features of writing situations and a resulting defensible specification of the domain of writing tasks. This is a functional approach to construct validity and it was used in the IEA International Study of Written Composition. In other words, since it is not easy to say directly what writing ability consists of, we chose to look at what functions writing has in general and in what situational contexts it occurs. This means that we have focussed on the initial conditions of writing and on its functions. This approach is derived from ideas expressed by de Saussure and Wegener[1] and further elaborated by Gardiner in his The Theory of Speech and Language (1932) and by Jakobson

(1960). The Finnish language scholar Rolf Pipping has dealt with similar topics in his Språk och stil (1940), where he shows how styles are related to the relationships between the three extralinguistic factors (speaker/writer, listener/reader, topic) and the linguistic factor (text).

Language testing needs to consider what are the constants, parameters and variables of language use (Takala, 1986). Roughly speaking the constants are: sender/addressor, receiver/addressee/audience, topic, channel and text. The parameters represent the various characteristics that specify the actual characteristics of the constants (e.g., the identity of the writer and audience, purpose of writing, assumed background knowledge, the perspective from which the topic is dealt with, etc., see Purves, Soter, Takala & Vähäpassi, 1984). The variables are the modes of organization and the use of rhetorical and linguistic resources. Language testing should not be too much preoccupied with linguistically based concepts and is not sufficiently sociological, psychological and educational in terms of its research questions and units of analysis (cf. Takala, 1984).

In the IEA International Study of Written Composition, for which I have acted as the coordinator since 1981, we have attempted to develop a definition of the domain of writing on the basis of the approach described in the above (see Vähäpassi, 1982; Takala & Vähäpassi, 1983; Takala & Vähäpassi, 1987).[2]

Briefly, Vähäpassi suggests that in any writing situation, there is a writer who writes about something with a certain purpose and audience in mind. Writing is an act of communication and an activity of cognitive processing.

Vähäpassi systematizes the domain of writing by taking communication and cognitive processing as two main dimensions of her typology (Figure 1). On the communication axis (i.e., functional approach to writing) she distinguishes several dominant purposes of writing and specifies main categories of audience. On the cognitive processing dimension (i.e, genetic approach to writing)

Figure 1. General Model of Written Discourse

Dominant Intention/ Purpose	Primary Content / Primary Audience	I REPRODUCE Linguistically Precoded/Predetermined Information	II ORGANIZE/REORGANIZE Known Spatial/Temporal Phenomena, Concepts or Mental States	III INVENT/GENERATE New or Alternative Spatial/Temporal Phenomena, Concepts or Mental States	
1. To learn (meta-lingual. mathetic)	Self	Copying Taking dictation	Retell a story (heard or read) Note Resume Summary Outline Paraphrasing	Comments on book margins Metaphors Analogies	
2. To convey emotions, feelings (emotive)	Self Others	Stream of Consciousness	Personal story Portrayal Personal diary Personal letter	Reflective writing -- Personal essays	The traditior
3. To inform (referen-tial)	Others	Quote Fill in a form	Narrative report News Instruction Telegram Announcement Circular Directions Description Technical description Biography Science report/ experiment	Expository writing -- Definition -- Academic essay/article -- Book review -- Commentary	literary genr and modes can be placed
4. To con-vince persuade (conative)	Others	Citation from authority/expert	Letter of application Advertisement Letter or advice Statement of personal views, opinions	Argumentative/ persuasive writing -- Editorial -- Critical essay/article	under one or more
5. To enter-tain, de-light, please (poetic)	Others	Quotation of poetry and prose	Given an ending- create a story Create an ending Retell a story Word portrait or sketch Causerie	Entertainment writing — Parody — Rhymes	of these four purposes.
6. To keep in touch (phatic)	Others	Postcards	Postcards, letters		

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she distinguishes three hierarchical levels of processing and specifies main categories of content which is processed. This system produces a grid and various text types can be located within its cells. It can also be used in selecting assignments for writing.

To conclude this section, let me reiterate that we can hope to make real progress in the testing of writing only if we continue to take seriously the problem of conceptual nature of writing and the domain of writing tasks.

4. Test Types for Measuring Writing Ability

Once we have some idea of the nature of writing and of the domain of writing tasks we can tackle the question of possible test types to be used in testing of writing ability.

Lado (1962) made a clear distinction between creative writing and ordinary writing. Also, consistently with his habit emphasis and habit transfer, Lado believed that the testing of writing could be advanced best by listing the particular problems that a writer's particular linguistic background was expected to create.

Lado distinguished between an integrated method of testing writing by asking students to produce a connected piece of writing (what now would often be called "writing with composing" or "a direct measure of writing ability") and a method of testing writing with separate factors such as punctuation, spelling, structure or vocabulary ("writing without composing", "an indirect measure of writing ability"). This latter method would make it possible to sample the problems systematically. Lado recognized, however, that the validity of the synthetic approach was not readily conceded and he discussed ways of improving the objectivity of scoring composition tests.

Lado recommended a many-sided test of writing, and suggested the following as one possible design: (1) Objective, partial production, multiple-choice

items (50-80) dealing with specific problems of spelling, punctuation, grammatical structure, and vocabulary. (2) Twenty or thirty items of the objective, partial production type on a single connected passage testing chiefly matters of sequence and transition signals. (3) Three pictures with instructions to write a paragraph about each with grading based on mechanics only (= number of errors per 100 words). (4) Two short compositions on assigned topics (30 minutes each) with grading based on style, content and mechanics. Roughly similar views have been presented by Valette, Pilliner and Finocchiaro and Sato.

In recent times, there have been attempts by experts in L1 instruction to develop methods for a domain-references measurement of writing (Baker, 1982). These appear quite promising for L2 testing, as well.[3]

6. Schemes for Rating Written Products

Several systems have been proposed to be used in the evaluation of student writing. Many are based on long pedagogical traditions, but some are based on empirical studies. There are also several ways of classifying methods of measuring writing ability. Wesdorp (1981) suggests the following classification: global rating, primary trait scoring, analytic scoring, scale rating, interlinear method, objective testing.[4]

In this paper I will mainly discuss writing with composing and discuss holistic scoring, analytic scoring and primary trait scoring as the most common forms of rating written products. I shall begin with holistic scoring.

Typical of holistic scoring (e.g., Cooper 1977) is that the rater takes a script and either (1) matches it with another piece of writing in a graded set of scripts, or (2) rates it for the quality of certain features considered important to that kind of writing, or (3) assigns it a letter or number grade. The placing, rating or grading is done quickly, on the basis of the first

impression, after the rater has practised the procedure together with other raters. Holistic scoring, when conducted with rigor, uses scoring guides, or rubrics, which distinguishes it from a more haphazard impressionistic scoring.

Perhaps the best known analytic scoring system is the one developed by Diederich (1974). The Diederich scale was developed empirically by using factor analysis. A sample of writing was scored by experts representing different disciplines. The factors extracted were: ideas, organization, wording, flavor, and mechanics. The last category is sometimes sub-divided into usage, punctuation, spelling, and handwriting. Each factor is rated on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high), and ideas and organization are rated on a scale from 2 to 10 (ie., they received a double weitghting). Thus the scores can vary from 10 to 50.

Another example of an analytic scoring method is given by Quellmalz (1979). She defines an expository scale consisting of general impression, essay focus/main idea (the subject and main idea are clearly indicated), essay organization (the main idea is developed according to a clearly discernible method of organization), support (generalizations and assertions are supported by specific, clear supporting statements), and mechanics (the essay is free of intrusive and mechanical errors).

Mullis (1980) explains that the rationale of primary-trait scoring is that writing is addressed to some audience and it is judged in view of its effect on that audience. Primary-trait scoring focusses on assessing whether a piece of writing has certain characteristics or primary traits that are crucial to success with a given rhetorical task. Lloyd-Jones (1977) expresses the goal of primary-trait scoring as follows: "to define precisely what segment of discourse will be evaluated (e.g., by presenting rational persuasion between social equals in a formal situation) and to traind readers to render

holistic judgments accordingly. (p. 37). He states further that the main steps are to define the universe of discourse, to devise exercises which sample that universe precisely, to the writers' cooperation, to devise workable scoring guides, and to use the guides.

The universe of discourse is defined by a three-part model, which can be discourser oriented (expressive discourse), subject oriented (explanatory discourse) or audience oriented (persuasive discourse). The scoring guide consists of (1) the task itself, (2) a statement of the primary rhetorical trait of the writing which should be elicited by the task, (3) an interpretation of the task indicating how each element of the stimulus is presumed to affect the writer, (4) an interpretation of how the situation of the task is related to the posited primary trait (a summary of 2 and 3), (5) a system for defining the shorthand which is to be used in reporting descriptions of the writing (the actual scoring guides), (6) samples of papers which have been scored (definition of the score points), and (7) discussions of why each sample paper was scored as it was (extensions of the definitions).

Lloyd-Jones (1977) suggests that primary-trait scoring has certain advantages which outweigh its difficulty. The explicitness of the scoring guide helps to establish the validity of the scoring. By focusssing sharply on specific types of discourse, more information can actually be obtained from writers' strengths and weaknesses than by a more gobal approach.

In the IEA International Study of Written Composition both the overall impression and analytic ratings are used because they are complementary procedures, not mutually exclusive. The analytic ratings do not necessarily add up to the general impression. On the other hand, more specific information is obtained if analytic ratings are also made. The figure on the next page shows how the rating system is related to the psychological concept of writing

described in the above (for a more detailed account, see Gorman & Purves, 1986).

The use of the same rating categories in all tasks is justified since content, organization, style, and linguistic correctness can all be distinguished in all discourse (perhaps their configurations do in fact define the range of text types), and the rater also tends to make an overall quality

estimation. It has to be emphasized, however, that the specific meaning of each category is defined task by task. To take an example, the content clearly varies task by task, and the organization of a story is different from the organization of a reflective essay. As stated in the above, even within the story genre the sequence of events has to be arranged in a different order depending on whether the aim is to bring about in the reader a response of suspense, surprise or curiosity. There is no a priori reason to assume that a writer automatically masters such discourse-organization skills. On the con-

trary, it is more likely that all these story organization patterns have to be learned through examples and through practice. Similarly it is possible that the grammatical, punctuation and spelling skills vary to some extent from task to task. Different genres call for somewhat different types of syntactical structures (Perera, 1984).

Wesdorp (1981) has assessed the practicality of various methods of assessing writing and summarizes his conlusions in a table form as follows:

	Global Rating		Primary Trait	Analytic Scoring	Scale Scoring	Inter-linear	Objective testing
	Indiv	Jury	Jury	Jury	Jury		
Chances of obtaining high reliability?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chances of obtaining reasonable content validity?	No	Yes?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Practicality in teaching?	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes?	No
Feasibility in selections?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Chances of positive washback on teaching?	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes?	No	No

7. What Does a Rating Depend On?

Among many interesting questions, the Swedish FRIS-Project (Lindell, 1980) has explored whether ratings can be consistently predicted by a linguistic analysis of the scripts. The answer was affirmative: above all, productivity predicted expert ratings. In other words, we can get a fairly good estimate of the quality of a script by simply checking its length. More specfically, the most important factors were the number of different words,

the number of unusual (non-frequent) words, the number of punctuation marks, and word length. Again, the dominant importance of good vocabulary in contrast to syntactic competence is demonstrated (Takala, 1984).

8. Conclusion

Writing serves many important functions in the lives of individuals and societies that speech cannot do equally well. Therefore, it is time to stop viewing writing as something very secondary to speech. This means that the testing of writing should be accorded equal attention as other aspects of language use. Most attention should then be devoted to "writing with composing", the making and conveying of meaning by writing.

Testing of writing in L2 can benefit greatly from the very intensive work done and being done by the L1 profession. Therefore, L2 professionals should add the most important L1 scholarly journals to their regular reading list. Both disciplines would benefit from close cross-disciplinary links.

Notes

[1] Wegener strongly emphasized the influence of the speech situation on the form of the linguistic expression.

[2] Murphy (1974) notes that if we are to understand western views of communication, we must recognize the dominant didactic impulse, the laying down of precepts for techniques that allow the speaker achieve, within the situation of discourse, the desired goal. Thus rhetoric had a pragmatic orientation: to convince the interlocutor. Aristotle, in his Rhetoric, defines rhetoric as the faculty of discovering all the available means of persuasion. He also made a distinction between epic peotry on the one hand and tragegy and comedy on the other. Aristotle clearly preferred the tragedy over the epic as higher art form, which attains its end more perfectly. He also refers to "drama" as poems imitating persons who are acting and doing something.

Kinneavy (1971) gives a succinct review worth quoting at some length:

> ... in Antiquity, three main aims of language structured the training in the art of discourse: the literary, the persuasive (rhetorical), and the pursuit of truth (dialectical). The analysis of literary texts was the province of the secondary school: the other two aims were "collegiate" and university concerns. In composition, which was directed to a preparation for rhetoric, certain forms or modes were thought to be basic to all composition (narrative, description, eulogy, and definition) and structured the composition program. (p. 8).

However, Kinneavy suggests that the common classification of the modes of discourse (forms, genres, types) into narration, exposition, argumentation, and description was not fully established before the mid-1800's (Bain's English Composition and Rhetoric, 2nd ed, 1867).

More recently, Moffett (1968), Britton et al. (1975), D'Angelo (1975), Kinneavy (1971), Wilkinson et al. (1980) and others have attempted to define models for teaching composition. I will, however, refer to the work of Vähäpassi (1982, 1983), as it has constituted an important part of my own work on writing and since I have also had some contribution to make to the development of that work.

[3] For a systematic analysis of writing assignments see Purves, Soter, Takala & Vähäpassi, 1984, and for an illustration of task assignment see Gorman & Purves, 1987.

[4] Harris (1969) assumes that in a normal writing situation the student has something to say and a personal point of view. The student must observe the normal requirements of form and present his views effectively. According to Harris, thus, writing is a complex skill, which must simultaneously take into account several points: 1) content, 2) form, 3) grammar, 4) style, 5) mechanics.

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